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ABSTRACT

The Ryukyu Islands of Japan, of which Okinawa is the best known, possess a lengthy history and a sophisticated cultural background, an exploration of which helps to shed light on this area and on mainland Japan. This document is an exposition of Ryukuan culture. Divided into eight sections, the areas covered include: (1) Historical perspective; (2) Chinese and Japanese influences on Okinawan culture; (3) Language; (4) Traditional festivals; (5) Arts; (6) Religion; (7) Customs; and (8) Summary and final comments. A number of illustrations appear at the end of the paper, as do a 29-item bibliography and a 39-item periodical bibliography. (DB)

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RYUKYUAN CULTURE

by Terry Trafton

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RYUKYUAN CULTURE

Historical Perspective

Okinawans "are extraordinarily and consistently non-aggressive and peace-loving, worshipful of ancestors and reverent about nature and the land, and tend to place considerably less emphasis on pride and cultural superiority than do many peoples, including their Eastern neighbors. If other traditional cultures clearly exhibit some of these traits, few display all of them to the extent that the Okinawans do." (Shiels, 1980:55-56).

"...Okinawa is an integral part of Japan; that is to say, the people in Okinawa are historically, ethnically and culturally a part of the Japanese nation." (Watanabe, 1970:3).

The history of Okinawa was divided into five periods (Sakihara, 1987:10-12).

1. Primitive Society - the pre-agricultural era to about the third or fourth century A.D.

2. Village Society - the period of the small agricultural village from about the third or fourth century to the end of the twelfth century.

3. Warring Period - from the twelfth to the early fifteenth century.

4. Early Kingdom - an independent kingdom of the Ryukyus from 1422 to 1609; eras of the first and second Sho dynasties.

5. Late Kingdom - from 1609 to 1868; second Sho dynasty is a vassal kingdom of the Satsuma clan in Japan.

Two prehistoric cultures actually existed in the Ryukyus, one in the north and the other in the south. Excavations on the islands of Amami and Okinawa uncovered the remains of more than 450 shell mounds which date back 4,000 years. From about 500 B.C. to 100 B.C., the shell mounds indicated a sudden decrease in animal and fish bones, possibly indicating a larger dependence on vegetation for food. Gradually, the early settlements located their villages closer to the sea, and net fishing was prevalent. Excavations since 1963 have established evidence of cultural contacts with the Yayoi culture in Kyushu, Japan. ("Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan", 1983:85).

By the tenth century, when the shell mound age ended in the northern Ryukyus, social structures had become more developed, probably because of trade contacts with Japan and China. Construction of numerous forts and castles "implies greater social differentiation, functional specialization, and improvement in tools and weapons." ("Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan", 1983:85). An expanding population increased the number of villages. In many southern areas, rice was cultivated in paddies, and the raising of horses and cattle became significant.

Central Okinawa, which included Naha, Shuri, Urasoe, and various adjacent areas, was considerably more developed than either the north or south regions. The important ports of

Naha, Tomari, and Makiminato on the East China Sea coast, and Yagi port on the Pacific coast were essential to overseas trade from earliest times. This access to foreign trade meant economic and political advantages which made Chuzan (Middle Kingdom) the cultural center of Okinawa (Sakihara, 1987:101-102).

The Shunten dynasty (1187-1259) was the first royal dynasty in the Ryukyus which derived economic success from the fact that its capital city of Urasoe was located in a predominately agricultural area which had excellent harbor access. Jurisdiction of the Urasoe kingdom became the responsibility of the Eiso dynasty (1260-1349), which was comprised of five successive rulers (Eiso, Taisei, Eiji, Tamagusuku, and Seii). During their reigns, the Jori system (square-field land distribution system) regulated tax collection and exacted tributes from the outer islands.

The subsequent Satto dynasty (1349-1406) was brief but significant. King Satto (1321-1395) sent the first tribute delegation to China in 1372, establishing trade and diplomatic relations which lasted for the next five centuries. During Satto's rule, 36 Chinese families came to the Ryukyus to serve as navigators, shipwrights, interpreters, teachers, diplomats, and ministers. Settling in Kume , these new immigrants and their descendants administered Chinese customs and culture.

The unification of northern and southern Okinawa by King Sho Hashi (1372-1439) in 1422 was a major achievement of the

first Sho dynasty (1406-1469). The second Sho dynasty began in 1470 and reigned the next four hundred and nine years, or until Okinawa became a prefecture of Japan in 1879.

King Sho Shin (reign:1477-1526) has received credit for resolving occasional military conflicts among warring anji (lords), and for ensuring permanent peace by disarmament, and relocation of these local rulers to the capital city of Shuri. He also centralized control over the religious hierarchy by preventing nobelmen from appointing their own sisters as nuru (chief priestesses) who controlled religious affairs inside their respective territories. Instead, nuru were appointed by the king and assigned to the immediate jurisdiction of Sho Shin's sister, who was designated chief priestess ("Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan", 1983:85-86).

Cultural diffusion increased when the territorial lords were relocated near the capital of Shuri. Each anji retained a household staff, and following a period of service in Shuri or Naha, many of these young men returned to their home villages to marry. Traditional ways continued to be affected by the more progressive ideas imparted by these men who were presumed less conservative, and more knowledgeable of recent songs and dances, who knew the newest styles of dress, and the latest slang (Kerr, 1958:114-115).

By mid-sixteenth century, Chuzan rule extended over all four primary island groups of the Ryukyus: Amami, Miyako, Yaeyama, and Okinawa. Cultural and commercial reciprocity with

China expanded, and in Okinawa palaces and cities were designed in the Chinese style. A social class system was established, and Buddhism became an increasingly more pervasive religion.

This cultural expansion evoked admiration from Chinese visitors; but prosperity was not equally distributed among all Ryukyuan people, and the Chinese envoys which recognized the grand effect of Shuri Palace, the magnificent Buddhist temples and other public buildings, also realized that the more common people lived in unpretentious dwellings with "thatched roofs and dirty steps, easily shaken by the winds." ("Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan", 1983:86).

Sho Joken (1617-1675) reduced the influence of women in the royal court, recognized private ownership of retrieved land, and effected political reform. He also promoted the study of Japanese arts, and attempted to establish a common ancestry between Ryukyuans and Japanese. In his history of Okinawa ("Chuzan sekan", 1650), Joken identified the similarities of the Ryukyuan and Japanese languages. The first Ryukyuan language dictionary, "Konkokenshu" was completed in 1711. Among the Okinawan aristocracy, the ryuka (30 syllable Ryukyuan poetic form), the waka (31 syllable Japanese form), and Chinese poetic forms were all popular during "Ryukyu's Second Golden Age."

Gima Shinjo (1557-1644) assisted Joken with agricultural reforms. He quickly recognized the important potential of the sweet potato when it was introduced from China by Noguni Sokan

in 1606 (Kerr, 1958:156). It could be planted in non irrigable soils at higher elevations. Two crops were harvested annually, and were used primarily for human consumption. Inferior crops were mashed into feed for pigs and goats (McCune, 1975:73-74).

The sweet potato crop relieved the severity of famines, and was largely responsible for the significant population increase during the first half of the seventeenth century. Gima also acquired cotton seeds, imported weavers from Satsuma, and began the manufacture of cotton cloth. In 1623, he demonstrated the Chinese method of extracting juice from sugarcane. As a result, the sugar industry grew more profitable, and became a government monopoly by 1647.

Tamagusuku Chokun (1684-1734) had studied No and Kabuki in Japan. In 1719, he produced Okinawa's first musical dance drama ("kumi odori"). His works were routinely performed at the Shuri court to entertain visiting Chinese diplomats. Though the shamisen, (three-stringed instrument characteristic of Ryukyuan music) was probably introduced from China in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, Tansui Kenchu (1623-1682) was primarily responsible for the origins of Ryukyuan music. Also during this same time, painting, sculpture, calligraphy, ceramics, weaving, and lacquerware achieved representative popularity among many Okinawan craftsmen ("Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan", 1983:85-86).

Although Chinese authority did not interfere with the

politics of the Okinawan monarchy, Japan's subsequent and persistent impositions greatly reduced the autonomy of ruling Okinawan kings. When the Okinawan monarchy ended in 1879, the royal family was removed to Tokyo and supported by a modest pension. Amami and all other northern islands were incorporated into Kagoshima prefecture. Okinawa and all islands to the south were included in the Okinawa prefecture. The Ryukyus officially became the annexed property of Japan, an arrangement which remained until 1945, at which time the United States assumed control (Zabilka, 1966:15-19).

Chinese and Japanese Influences

Existing in the history of any culture, is "a period of transition from the primitive stage, when there was yet no nation but numerous independent and isolated tribal groups, to the recent, when the nation or state was formed with full consciousness of its cultural and national oneness and distinctiveness." (Sakihara, 1987:203).

"Okinawans have always had a special knack for acquiring the cultural elements of foreign nations through trade and combining them with their own to create a culture that is unique and ultimately indigenous to Okinawa." (Wittig, "Treasures of The Moromi Folkcraft Museum", 1988:28).

Liu Ch'iu (Ryukyus) was frequently mentioned in the annals of Chinese history. It was referred to by Chinese historians as a land of eternal youth inhabited by "happy immortals."

(Hogg, 1973:94-95). Chinese coins dating from the third century B.C. have been excavated in Okinawa. There is some conjecture that the Chinese sent an expedition to the Ryukyus as early as 219 B.C.

The earliest written accounts of Okinawa's history began early in the fifteenth century, and by that time, the Okinawan kingdom had established a practicable feudal society. Accepting Chinese political authority, Okinawa continued to pay tribute to the Middle Kingdom until 1874, guaranteeing Okinawans various trade advantages.

"In return, China conferred upon Okinawa a system of writing, a predilection for Confucianism that influenced the native religion and provided the basis for a bureaucracy by examination resembling China's, and the yearly almanac that played so important a role in Okinawan daily life." (Hogg, 1973:96).

Probably the first Okinawan contact with Chinese learning occurred about the end of the 14th century when students from the central and southern kingdoms were sent to China to be educated. The route from Naha to Foochow developed into a "cultural corridor" (Glacken, 1955:32-33). Many Okinawans adopted Confucian ideals of benevolence and ethics, which was responsible for an apparent dualism in Okinawan culture. Older village folk life was often in acute contrast to life in Shuri and Naha. Old traditions were revered and retained throughout Okinawa; but in the Chinese settlement of Kume, new ideas were

imported from Fukien, China, and gradual cultural and political impacts were observed in Okinawa until the late nineteenth century.

"...Okinawan students came to serve as clerks and to study China's language and its institutions, and it is to this area that we must look for prototypes in artifacts and architecture, agricultural techniques and social patterns which distinguished the old Ryukyu tradition from the Japanese. Okinawa's distinctive tombs and bridges, foodstuffs and textiles, recreations and deportment owe much to the lessons learned here at Ch'uang-chou in Fukien." (Kerr, 1958:93).

Elegant imports contrasted strongly with the striking poverty of Okinawan exports. Shuri encouraged local craftsmen to produce better quality products, and inspired the textile industry to become more progressive and specialized. Banana plant fibers were used to produce an extremely fine textile suitable for people living in hot and humid climates.

Use of bright colors and large, distinctive patterns was influenced by imports from the southern islands. Quality of cloth, color, and applied design determined a man's rank. By royal decree, this tradition conformed to the Chinese idea of "cap rank." (Kerr, 1958:95). Hachimaki (headdress) became the overt symbol of status in the Shuri court hierarchy. Although the hachimaki was reserved for higher court officials, almost all males wore their hair in topknots, into which a kanzashi (long pin) was inserted. The aristocracy wore pins of inlaid

gold; silver was assigned to middle-class use; brass, copper, or wood was adopted by the lower classes.

Chinese impressions on Okinawan Culture were evident in various forms of art and architecture. Shodo (calligraphy), the ancient art of writing kanji (Chinese characters) with a soft brush and India ink, was introduced from China prior to the Heian period (794-1184). Subsequently, it became a distinctive Japanese art imbued with flourishes of a unique Okinawan style (Sugimura, "Okinawa's Chinese Connection", 1988:32).

Until the Japanese invasion occurred in the early seventeenth century, Okinawa essentially adhered to its own political dispositions. It continued to regard China as a prosperous trade ally, exchanging Okinawan crafts for "the gifts of Chinese civilization." (Hogg, 1973:97).

Following the Satsuma invasion of Okinawa in 1609, Okinawan interest in folk arts, Japanese drama, and temple architecture increased. The tea ceremony captivated many Okinawan aristocrats, and since it required the use of various utensils, influenced the development of Okinawa's pottery industry.

The Okinawan people have endeavored to assimilate a concordant culture which merges old indigenous traditions with substantial social and economic influences of other countries, particularly China and Japan. Okinawa acknowledged its cultural indebtedness to China, and maintained a somewhat

apprehensive alliance with a more enigmatic Japan. Some historians regard these early centuries as a period of "lethargy" (Hogg, 1973:103), during which time amenable Okinawan dispositions developed.

Certainly one of the greatest Japanese cultural impacts on the Ryukyu kingdom was a gradual diminution of the importance of women in Okinawan political life. The Japanese government showed an aversion of the nuru system, which recognized the dynastic position of women, and which was considerably more reminiscent of China than Japan.

"Authorities on Ryukyuan history believe that the origin of many of the most distinctive traits of the Ryukyuan, and especially the Okinawan people, can be traced to the early seventeenth century, the beginning of a period of divided loyalties resulting from subordination to China and Japan; the mildness, pliability, acquiescence, and agreeableness of the people, commented upon by so may observers, are seen as a product of this long period in which a weak and small people was forced to placate two powerful civilizations." (Glacken, 1955:37).

"The nearness of the Ryukyu Islands to the richly endowed civilizations of China and Japan was the most important factor affecting their development until the capture and conquest of Okinawa in 1945 opened them to direct American contact." (Glacken, 1955:6).

Language

"As there is no evidence of political unity in the Ryukyus until the 15th century, there is no reason to assume a linguistic unity before this time." ("Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan", 1983:355).

Extant examples of Okinawan written language in kana (Japanese), date to the thirteenth century. The "Omoro soshi" ("Anthology of the poems of sentiments"), (Sakihara, 1987:vi), is an orally transcribed history of early Okinawa, and remains the earliest account of written Okinawan language. Since that time, records in the literary dialects of Shuri have been relatively consistent ("Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan", 1983:355).

The "Omoro soshi" contains more than a thousand poems collected from twelfth to early seventeenth century Ryukyuan villages. These poems establish a demarcation line between Ryukyuan prehistoric and historic eras. The legendary emergence of the Ryukyus was ostensibly recorded in this classic work (Sakihara, 1987:vi).

With Chuzan domination during the fifteenth century, Shuri dialect became the national language of the Ryukyus. Even after the Satsuma invasion in 1609, the Shuri government retained some diplomatic power in its subservient relationship with Japan, and Shuri speech remained the language of the Ryukyus. In 1878, with the establishment of the Okinawa prefecture, standard Japanese replaced Shuri dialect as the

national language ("Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan", 1983:355-357).

During the seventeenth century, both men and women composed allusive verses called waka. They were written in Japanese hiragana, "which lent itself easily to spontaneous expression and imposed no difficulties in recording local dialect." (Kerr, 1958:224). There were frequent references to the sea and to island landscapes in these writings, which conveyed the importance of a simplistic existence. Onna Nabe wrote:

Nami nu kwim tumari Waves, be still!
Kaji nu kwim tumari And quiet, Wind!
Shu-i tin ga nashi The king from Shuri comes -
Miun chi ugama. And we must pay him reverence.
(Kerr, 1958:224).

Although closely related to Japanese, Ryukyuan dialects were diverse and usually unintelligible to those who spoke standard Japanese. Okinawans often lengthened Japanese short vowels. This was always done with one syllable words. For example, te (hand, Japanese) became tii in Okinawan. Compound words generally received high pitch, while simpler words had no pitch, or higher pitch on second syllables. If words had only two syllables, higher pitch was on the first syllable. Accented words in Tokyo were usually unaccented in Okinawa ("Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan", 1983:355-357).

There remains a close similarity in the sentence formation

of both Japanese and Okinawan. Predicates almost always occur at the end of a clause. Numerous suffixes indicate tenses and moods. Honorifics are also formed similarly in both languages.

Traditional Festivals

"...Okinawa's own cultural expressions are unique and well-represented in their dances, festivals and arts." (Kishaba, 1988:8).

Ryukyuan culture reflects the history of many centuries. Chinese influence continues to be significant. The lunar year is divided into 24 seasons, from 14 to 17 days in length, and comprises a multiplicity of holidays and festivals which combines Okinawan observances with Chinese and Japanese customs.

Most Okinawan holidays relate to some particular ritual which consecrates the kami (spirit). Influence of the family system is also discernible in the many religious observances commemorating these lunar year holidays. Celebrations emphasize two recurrent themes: Reverence of ancestors and acknowledgment of good crops (Glacken, 1955:89).

GANJITSU (Lunar New Year) celebrations are preceded by a series of activities occurring on the twelfth lunar month. Outstanding debts are resolved, houses cleaned, and the eldest son (Hogg, 1973:52-53) of the family retains the obligation to decorate home interiors with bamboo and pine. Mochi (rice

cakes) are consumed, and the first tea of the New Year is prepared from wakmizu (young water). There are religious pilgrimages to shrines and temples where families pray for the spirits of deceased ancestors (Glacken, 1955:251-253).

Another custom is the hanging of shimenawa (rice straw) above the doors to homes and businesses, These are good luck charms intended to keep away evil spirits. Sometimes, pine trees are placed on each side of an entrance, behind which bamboo stalks are arranged. The pine tree is symbolic of long life, while the bamboo represents "constancy and virtue." ("Welcome Okusan", 1982-1983:274).

SEIJIN NO HI (Day of Adulthood) is celebrated each January 15 to honor a person who has reached the age of twenty. Independence and individual self-reliance are important characteristics of the new adult, who is expected to assume an active and responsible role in society.

SAKURA MATSURI (Cherry Blossom Festival) has its origin in feudal Japan. Samurai discovered an analogy between the fragil and tenuous life of the cherry blossoms and their own ephemeral existence (DeMente, 1989:37).

The first cherry blossoms appear in Okinawa in late February, and indicate the approaching of spring. Flower exhibits, dancing and singing are part of the festivities.

HINA MATSURI (Festival of Dolls), also known as Girls' day, is observed on the third day of the third lunar month. It is a time of reassuring respect among family members.

Connected to an ancient superstition of Japan's Fujiwara period (886-1160), this festival involves the displaying of wood and paper dolls to guard against evil spirits ("Welcome Okusan", 1982-1983:276). Dolls are considered representations of a god or human being, and are expected to protect a family against bad luck. Dolls are displayed on a tiered shelf called a hina-dan. At the top are the images of the Emperor and Empress. On successive lower levels are ladies in waiting, musicians, and soldiers ("Okinawa Today", "Hina Matsuri", 1990:3,28).

KODOMO NO HI (Children's Day) is a time to wish all children good luck and prosperity. Celebrated on May 5, koi-nobori (carp streamers) are flown from bamboo poles as symbols of bravery and strength The top streamer is black and represents the father. Immediately beneath, is a smaller red one, symbolizing the mother. Still smaller streamers are added for each child in the family ("Welcome Okusan", 1982-1983:277). Since the carp annually swims upstream to its spawning grounds, it is hoped that children will show the same courage and persistence as the fish, when facing life's problems (Zabilka, 1966:106-108).

During this celebration, rice cakes, filled with sweet bean paste and wrapped with oak leaves, are served in the home.

HARYU-SEN (Dragon Boat Races) celebrate the prosperity of fishermen, and esteem the gods of the sea, who have protected them. Boats are brightly painted to resemble dragons, and in

each May or June, races have been held for centuries along the shores of Okinawa. Fishermen who have disappeared during the past year, and who fail to return to their home or village by this date are pronounced legally dead ("Welcome Okusan", 1982-1983:277). Before the races, villagers journey to religious sites to make offerings and to pray (Glacken, 1955:254).

TANABATA actually marks the beginning of the Bon (honoring of the dead) celebration. Traditionally, this holiday was observed on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month, a custom still followed by the Okinawans. In Japan, however, July 7 is the fixed date of the "Star Festival." (Hogg, 1973:56-57).

Origins of Tanabata date to 755 when the Japanese borrowed the celebration from the Chinese and Koreans. It denotes the meeting of two lovers personified by the stars Vega and Altair. Poems are written on strips of paper and attached to branches of trees, and special foods are also prepared (DeMente, 1989:79). Since these stars cross yearly, rain during the evening of Tanabata is considered unfortunate, even ominous (Harris, "Tanabata: Celebration of 'Star Crossed' Lovers", 1985:10-11).

OBON (Festival of the Dead) is one of Okinawa's major festivals. It originated in India and was introduced to Okinawa around the thirteenth century. A three day reunion of the living with the spirits of the dead, Obon begins on the

thirteenth day of the seventh lunar month ("Okinawa Today", "Obon", 1988:3).

During Obon, spirits of the dead are enticed to their earthly home (Glacken, 1955:254-255). On the first day, incense is burned at the gate or entrance. Certain foods are prepared and served first to the spirits then to family members who have gathered in front of the shrine. Watermelons, pineapples, sugar cane, and litchi nuts are traditional. Fish, meat, and fowl are never offered to returning spirits. Instead, an eggplant resembling a bull or horse is provided. This imaginary animal will return the spirits to their permanent homes at the end of the third day (Zabilka, 1966:110-112). All family members are expected to return home for Obon (Hogg, 1973:57).

Second day activities include the exchanging of gifts, and continued celebration. After the spirits have been induced to leave on the third day, the eisa dance is performed to ensure a happy departure. This energetic dance is usually performed by young people whose stylized movements are accompanied by the shamisen and taiko.

OZUNAHIKI (Harvest Ceremony) began over a century ago when Okinawan farmers attempted to scare insects from their fields by beating drums. This holiday is celebrated each August when Okinawan communities compete against each other in a tug-of-war (Cole, "Let's Play Tug of War", 1990:18). Nuru (priestesses) still play a major role by holding mystic religious ceremonies

(Kishaba, 1988:74).

There are several other important festivals celebrated at shrines and temples throughout Okinawa. Although traditional customs and cultural history comprise the basis of these festivals, there is some indication that younger Okinawans are observing the holidays, without realizing the true meanings.

Arts

"The daily lives of Okinawan people are reflected in the simplicity, the color and the form characterizing Okinawan ceramics." (Kishaba, 1988:124).

During the first Sho dynasty and early in the second Sho dynasty, Okinawan kilns produced namban, unglazed pottery and rough glazed pottery utensils. This utilitarian pottery was used daily by the common people. Glazed pottery was imported by the wealthy, usually from China and Korea.

Three Korean potters reached Okinawa from Satsuma in 1617. They were members of a community of Korean craftsmen who had been brought to Japan by Shimazu forces. They introduced ceramic techniques to both Japanese and Okinawan craftsmen who responded enthusiastically to the acquisition of new styles and skills. One Korean potter remained in Tsuboya, and was instrumental in building the reputation of the Tsuboya kilns (Kerr, 1958:220-221).

The Royal Government at Shuri took an intense interest in

the ceramic arts during the reign of Sho Tei. In 1671, a man influential in the history of Okinawan pottery, Hirata Tentsu, was sent by the government to China. He studied the techniques of pottery decoration, especially aka-e, decoration in red overglaze. When he returned to Okinawa, Tentsu assumed responsibility for tiling the roofs of public buildings. About 1683, he developed a technique for applying white glaze to ceramic utensils for use in the royal palace (Stockton, n.d.:1-7).

Throughout history Okinawan structures had been destroyed either by natural disasters or by various military conflicts, and a consequent need to replace them stimulated the ceramics industry. A new glazing and firing technique for the manufacture of roof tiles was introduced by Japanese craftsmen. Multicolored tiles were used on Shuri government buildings; red tiles were used on granaries and storehouses, and were shipped to the outer islands of Miyako and Yaeyama (Kerr, 1958:220-221).

Kilns existed in the villages of Chibana and Takaraguchi. The Chibana kilns specialized in namban, the Takaraguchi kilns in glazed pottery. Locations of these kilns became somewhat inconvenient, however. Chibana was too far from Shuri, which was the primary source of pottery use. Although located in Shuri, Takaraguchi was not near good clay or firewood supplies. The Royal Government decided to relocate the pottery industry in Tsuboya about 1682.

Good, desirable clays were abundant in Okinawa, which accounted for the early development and popularity of ceramics. Both grey and red clays were available in areas surrounding the Tsuboya site. Much of this land was eventually given to Tsuboya by the Shuri government, who also provided seven kilns, known as "Gohairyo-gama." (Stockton, n.d.:6). About this time, there were four roof tile kilns in the Shuri-Naha area. One was in Makishi, one near Wakuta, and two located in Shuri.

In addition to an abundance of good clay, water, was easily accessible to Tsuboya potters. A small port, conveniently located near Tsuboya, also permitted expedient transportation of supplies of firewood and special clays from northern Okinawa.

Land was assigned to Tsuboya potters and their families. Tsuboya ("pot shop") village ("Welcome Okusan", 1982-1983:295) was divided into Agari (East) and Iri (West) sides. The Iri side produced unglazed pottery called arayachi (red-baked), and the Agari side produced glazed pottery called joyaki (superior-baked). Joyaki pottery was called shiruyachi, which helped distinguish it from arayachi.

Traditional Okinawan patterns were established in Tsuboya, and retained a practicable consistency until the end of the Meiji era (1868-1912). Tsuboya produced nearly all the pottery used in Okinawa. Production of both glazed and unglazed pottery diminished during the Taisho era (1912-1926) when cheaply manufactured glazed ware from Japan became more

commonplace among Okinawan families.

The two types of pottery made in Tsyboya required different clays and firing procedures (Stockton, n.d.:6-18):

1. Arayachi - Arayachi was made from a mixture of red and grey clays obtained from southern Okinawa. A mixture of about 30% red clay was used with grey clay to make large pots. Since iron in the red clay tended to give a shiny effect to finished pots, no glaze was applied to dried pots. Firing was done in a tunnel kiln which was built on the slope of a hill. Pots were fired for approximately forty to fifty hours at a temperature of 900 degrees centigrade.

Today in Tsuboya, only one arayachi kiln exists.

2. Joyaki - Joyaki pottery was made from white clay from Nago and Afuso, and from red clay taken from Yamada, Afuso, and Yomitan. Although more expensive, white clay could not endure high kiln temperatures like red clay, and was not used as frequently.

Areas of pots which were to be decorated with colors were first covered with a glaze called shirogusuri (white glaze). This glaze was made of white clay mixed with water. After firing, it turned to an oyster grey-white, or light grey, or to a cream color. Glazes which produced different colors were used over the shirogusuri.

Greens were derived from a glaze called seiji. Okinawan seiji was a mixture of shinchu (ground brass), do (copper), and momigara (rice hulls) burnt together. Ame (yellow-brown) was

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produced by a glaze made of iron, seiji, and tsuya-gusuri (ground ocean coral). A soft greyish blue called cobaruto (cobalt powder), was made from seiji, and wood ashes.

Joyaki pottery was fired in a fukuro-gama (bag-kiln) designed with numerous connecting chambers, or in a nobori-gama (climbing-kiln). A fire was made at the bottom of the kiln, and after it had burned for about twelve hours, it was fed to the adjoining chambers where it burned another eight hours in each chamber. Centigrade temperatures reached 1200 degrees.

Following a cooling period, pots were removed from the kiln and the rough edges smoothed. Overglaze decoration was applied in a technique known as aka-e. The pots were then fired a second time in a smaller kiln at 900 degrees centigrade.

There are presently two operating kilns in Tsuboya, one with nine chambers, the other with three (Stockton, n.d.:4-18).

Pottery produced in Tsuboya was essentially for domestic use. Arayachi kilns made wide mouthed jars for water, and other jars with narrower openings for storing grain. Joyaki kilns produced plates, bowls, teacups, and pots. Some pots were used for lard storage, and others contained hair oil and awamori (rice wine). These kilns also manufactured decorative pottery which was regularly displayed in the main room in Okinawan homes. Joyaki kilns also manufactured ceremonial pieces in various shapes and sizes. One example of ceremonial pottery, the jiishigami was produced by both kilns. This

custom of using jars as repositories for bones of the dead is still observed by many Okinawans. Another pot found in nearly all Okinawan households was the miso gami. It was used as a container for beans, rice, and other grains (Stockton, n.d. 18,44,67. Lebra, 1985:200-201).

The crescent shaped dachibin, used as a container for awamori, was certainly one lasting example of pottery indigenous to Okinawa. It was designed to be worn on the hip, while suspended from the shoulder, and carried as a traveling flask to markets and festivals. Surviving examples from pre war periods often displayed elegant decorations and glazes. Presently, dachibin are made and sold to tourists as souvenirs (Stockton, n.d.:23).

Pots made of Okinawan clay frequently leaked, requiring those pots intended to hold water and other liquids to be covered in a kurogusuri (black glaze). After firing, kurogusuri became a dark greenish brown, and sometimes almost black.

There were other characteristics of Tsuboya pottery besides the specific glazing and overglazing techniques. Kugibori referred to the incision of designs in the body of the pot. Incised areas were smeared with clay of another color, then scraped to reveal the designs. Tobi kanna (chatter marks) were produced on the pot by careful application of a metal tool held lightly against the surface of the pot as the pot was rapidly rotated on a wheel. Takkwasaa, or moritsuke (Japanese)

required clay to be molded into various designs, which were then affixed to the surface of the pot. The process of mixing red and white clays in the body of the pot to produce a marbled effect, was known as momiage (Stockton, n.d.:17).

Purity of line and richness of hue were the two primary qualities which distinguished Okinawan pottery. The particular shape and use of a pot determined design themes and decorations, which were usually incised, painted or raised in and on the surface. Rural scenes were usually depicted on flower vases (Zabilka, 1966:49-50), and simplicity and serenity were clearly apparent in finished products (Hogg, 1973:64). Design and form delineated a harmony which reflected both Chinese and Japanese cultural influences (Zabilka, 1966:49-50).

Following World War II, a methodical study of Okinawan arts and crafts was conducted by a visiting twenty-six member group from the Japan Folk Art Museum in Tokyo, which attracted increasing attention, and which precipitated extended interest in the unique aspects of Okinawan culture. This inspired a "local cultural renaissance" (Kerr, 1958:456) among Okinawans, and advanced the realization that old and existing standards should not be abandoned to satisfy impinging export standards.

Tsuboya today is a somewhat dilapidated section of Naha. Along the narrow streets, high stone walls conceal the tired and ageing houses in which Okinawan potters continue to rotate the wheel in much the same way as their ancestors did - by kicking it with their feet. Finished pottery meets the demand

for Okinawa's increasing tourist trade.

Made from the wood of deigo and shitamagi trees, Okinawan lacquerware was meticulously hand-tooled by Okinawan craftsmen, who had learned their initial skills around 714 A.D. (Kishaba, 1988:124). Japanese explorers actually brought this art to Okinawa from China, and in 1437, seven Okinawans went to Japan to study the process in more detail. Lacquering was done initially to preserve wooden furniture against deterioration (Zabilka, 1966:55-57). However, the heat and humidity, of the Ryukyuan climate were especially compatible to production of exquisite lacquerware.

Chinkinbori (carved sunken gold) was a lacquerware technique with Chinese origins which included filling etched designs with gold powder. Excellent examples of Chinkinbori were found on extant lacquer from the Ryukyus. The Ryukyuans also advanced a process known as mitsuda-e - application of oil-based pigments to a lacquered surface (Clark, Harris, Smith, 1990:98).

After the wood had cured for approximately one year, it was cut and sanded into desired shapes, then primed with a mixture of blue clay lacquer, pigs' blood, and tung oil (Bradley, "Lacquerware", 1989:3). Lacquer, made from the sap of the sumac tree, was applied in consecutive layers, and designs were hand painted or appliqued ("Okinawa Today", "Okinawan Lacquerware", 1988:6). The red blossoms of the deigo tree and other natural scenes were favorite motifs (Beers,

"Okinawan Lacquerware", 1985:3-4).

Primarily because of Okinawa's location and lack of natural resources, early established trade routes enabled Okinawan textile workers to obtain silk from China and cotton from Japan. Special weaving and dyeing techniques were taught to the workers primarily by visiting Chinese craftsmen. Both cotton and silk were reserved for nobility and for export.

In feudal times, textiles were used for tributes required by both Chinese and Japanese governments. Since production was carefully regulated by the government, quality standards were consistently maintained, and Ryukyuan textiles eventually achieved a notable reputation among other Asian countries.

The first Okinawan textile was probably bashofu (abaca-cloth). This thin, cool material, made from the fiber of the male banana plant, has been used by Okinawans for centuries. It denoted the dress of commoners (Zabilka, 1966:54).

Processing required the banana stalk to be cut into four foot lengths, which made it easier for the short Okinawan women to work. The stalks were peeled, layer-by-layer, and each strip was then shredded into ribbons about one inch wide, then boiled in water for several hours. Next, the pliable strips were scraped between two pieces of split bamboo to remove the pulp. Following separation of each fiber, the numerous four foot lengths were tied into one long strand. Finally, they were transferred to spindles to be dried and dyed, and

eventually weaved.

Bashofu was measured by the tan. One tan was approximately fourteen inches wide and twelve yards long. It took nearly a month for one woman, devoting several hours daily to the process, to make one tan of bashofu material. To expedite production, a communal effort employing many village women, could produce one tan inside a week (Zabilka, 1966:54-55).

There are presently only two Okinawan villages where bashofu is woven, Kijoka (Hogg, 1973:64), and Ogimi (Zabilka, 1966:54). In Ogimi, more than thirty women combine their efforts to produce from five to six hundred tans of bashofu a year. Prior to the war, this same village manufactured over one thousand tans annually. Many tans were imported to China and Japan.

Another textile fabric unique to Okinawa was bingata (textile coloring). One of Okinawa's traditional folk arts, it has a history dating back 500 years (Timmons, "Bingata: An Indepth Look", 1988:28-29). Created by a stencil and dye process, bingata was brilliantly colored and conveyed Okinawan nature themes depicting flowers, shells, birds, fans, and rural scenes.

Researchers have connected the printing and dyeing procedures of bingata to textile manufacturing in India and Java. These methods had significant impact on bingata development in Okinawa. Although the procedure became more

specialized, Okinawan dyers refused to change the basic process and materials.

Dyes used in bingata were extracted from the indigo plant and from various other plants which grew abundantly in Okinawa. Vibrant colors and "majestic hues" (Timmons, "Bingata: An Indepth Look", 1988:28) were frequently "harmonious with the blue sky and sea of Okinawa." (Kishaba, 1988:124).

Cotton, banana cloth, silk, and linen were used for production of bingata. After the material to be dyed was fastened to a wide, flat board, a wet rice starch was applied over the entire cloth through paper stencils cut into desired patterns. These stencils were removed after the starch had dried, leaving the unstarched areas ready for outlining or dyeing. Small, stiff brushes were used to paint the selected colors along the starch lines. Once the dyeing was done, a mixture of tree sap and soybean juice was brushed over the material to prevent the colors from fading. The starch was washed from the cloth, and demarcated areas around the newly dyed designs remained (Zabilka, 1966:51-52).

A shading technique known as kuma-dori created more subdued effects. This process made bingata scenes "serene and graceful" (Timmons, "Bingata: An Indepth Look", 1988:29), and contrasted remarkably with the primary colors. Kimonos and costumes made of bingata were worn by many Ryukyuan folk dance performers.

"Folk crafts, unlike art, were created to endure heavy

use. Utility and beauty were so tightly entwined, that the beauty of an object apart from its usefulness had no meaning; and the more useful an object, the more meaningful it became. This commitment to beauty and utility can still be found in the folk craft textiles of the Ryukyus-weaving and bingata." (Bradley, "Okinawan Textiles", 1989:8).

Assimilation of imported techniques and processes were embellished with distinctive Ryukyuan styles to make folk crafts an important piece of Okinawan culture. Commitment to beauty and utility was inherent in textile arts like bashofu and bingata. There was also evident convergence of the "...physical and spiritual needs of the user." (Bradley, "Okinawan Textiles", 1989:8).

Music and folk dances reflected the everyday lives and customs of the Okinawan people. Religious ceremonies, harvests, celebrations, approaching journeys, and parting sorrows, the passing of seasons, and nature scenes were familiar and recurrent themes (Haring, 1969:108-123).

Again the Chinese influence was apparent in the discordant sounds of the Ryukyuan jyabi (Haring, 1969:108), or sanshin "Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan", 1983:357). Related to the Japanese shamisen and Chinese san xian, the resonance chamber of this three string instrument was covered with "tightly stretched snakeskin" (Haring, 1969:108), and was customary accompaniment for Okinawan folk songs and dances. Other essential instruments in Okinawan music were the taiko (stick

drum) and the koto, a thirteen string instrument made from paulownia wood (Zabilka, 1966:183).

Perceptions of Okinawans consistent with more recent observations, revealed a "mildness and kindliness of character and ...a general love and aptitude for singing and dancing." (Kerr, 1958:223-224). The "Omoro soshi" contained the song texts of over a thousand Ryukyuan court and regional songs collected between 1532 and 1623 ("Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan", 1983:357).

Folk dances, too, were inherited from Chinese culture and merged with Okinawa's own unrecorded past. Though each village had its own specific folk songs, lyrics were expectedly similar. An inherent respect for family relationships and a simplistic daily existence comprised the content of many of the several hundred collected and preserved Ryukyuan folk songs.

Since the sea figured so prominently in the lives of Okinawans, folk dances were imbued with rhythmic, graceful, circular movements which represented the undulations of the waves and tides. Such movements contrasted sharply with the more angular movements of Japanese folk dances developed mainly by farmers ("Okinawa Today", "Ryukyuan Folk Dances", 1989:34).

There were two primary types of folk dances ("Okinawa Today", Ryukyuan Folk Dances", 1989:34):

1. UKANCHIN (classical) were dances to entertain royalty and visiting envoys. They consisted of four different dances:

- Rojin - Solomnly performed in respect for the aged.

- Wakashu - Performed for boys under the age of twenty; extremely colorful costumes used.

-Onna - A dance for women; slow methodical movements; facial expressions retained importance. Rectangular shaped castanets made from bamboo were used by female performers.

-Otoko - Men's dance, performed alacriously in bingata kimonos.

2. ZO represented the new style of Okinawan folk dance begun during the Meiji period; portrayed lives of the common people. The tempo was quick and the music rhythmical.

Religion

Actual religious tradition in Okinawa can be traced to the creation myth recorded in the "Omoro Soshi." Women administered religion and dispensed religious knowledge. The nuru system was an "institutionalized religion" (Glacken, 1955:282) established in 1532 as part of the "national religious hierarchy." (Lebra, 1985:108). Presumably appointed from families "politically favorable" (Lebra, 1985:108) to the Shuri government, chief priestesses acquired influence and economic power largely because they owned property. They retained religious control until the demise of the nuru system about 1879 (Lebra, 1985:108-109, 134-135).

Like the Japanese, Okinawans had a prevailing interest in

shugyo (mental training). Buddhist doctrine instructed man how to reach a tranquil and balanced consciousness. Bias was eliminated and perceptions infused a realness relatable to artistic expression. The belief that a calm mind enabled an artist to realize the true nature of an object, reflected a fundamental empirical trait of Japanese culture. This general attitude presumed a merging of religious doctrine with aesthetics (Moore, 1968:245-254. Kishimoto, "Some Japanese Cultural Traits and Religions").

A common concern of all Japanese religions was the internal problems of man. Mental training converging on the removal of worries and anxieties from man's mind stressed immediate experience and consequent tranquility of mind. This pursuit of mental calmness has developed among the Japanese, the resourceful ability to manage difficult situations. Approaching death with passive and courageous acceptance, was an innate cultural tradition affirmed of religious doctrine. For both Japanese and Okinawans, death was not the end of life, but in one important sense, actually within life (Moore, 1968:245-254. Kishimoto, "Some Japanese Cultural Traits and Religions").

The ascendant religion among Okinawans was a veneration of ancestors and animistic worship of fire and the hearth (Appleman, Burns, Gugeler, Stevens, 1965:9). The context of fire represented "blood relationship and family continuity." (Roy, 1962:57). The hi no kami (god of fire) was worshiped

only by women whose communion required the burning of charcoal sticks in a stove or hearth.

Regarded with reverence were certain "natural objects, unusual geological formations, and places associated with ancestors." They were considered dwelling sites of kami (spirits). Utaki (sacred groves) were meeting places for "consanguineous community worship." ("Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan", 1983:85).

The late thirteenth century (Roy, 1962:58) emergence of Buddhism in the Ryukyus, required some alteration in existing Chinese customs of ancestor worship. Although Buddhism in Okinawa never secured the same response as it did in Japan, it was endorsed by the royal family and ruling class. Some Okinawans were sent to Japan to study this religion, and simultaneously acquired knowledge of both Confucianism and Japanese culture ("Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan", 1983:85).

Clearly, Buddhist ritual and intrinsic Ryukyuan religious practices included Confucian rituals of veneration of ancestors. By 1663, Buddhism had diminished religious significance in Okinawa, while Confucianism had gained importance. For many Okinawans, Buddhist doctrine was restricted to funerals and rituals which appeased the souls of the deceased (Haring, 1969:54-55).

Okinawans "follow tradition without much interest in whether a specific ritual or belief originated with Buddhism, Confucianism, or the complex ritual, superstition, and

religious feeling that the Japanese call Shinto...." (Haring, 1969:54).

Shintoism embraced feelings of admiration and respect of nature, and merged concisely with Okinawans' own simple thoughts about natural forces. Shinto doctrines stressed national loyalty and perpetuity of race. From 1609 (Satsuma invasion) until 1945 (American invasion), Buddhist, Christian, and local rites were performed less frequently by Okinawans than Shinto ceremonies. There were indications that Okinawan Shintoism was primarily an imitation of Shinto practices in Japan (Roy, 1962:58).

The torii was the gateway to Shinto shrines. Bowing was expected before passing beneath a torii. The shrine was not approached until hands were rinsed with water from a receptacle usually adjacent to the torii (Zabilka, 1966:76-77).

Another religion to have some influence in the Ryukyus, was Taoism, probably introduced by the "36 Chinese families who migrated to Okinawa in the 14th century." ("Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan", 1983:85). Taoism practices closely alligned with local beliefs of family nexus and ancestor worship (Roy, 1962:57). Departed ancestors were often interred in ostentatiously constructed tombs (Zabilka, 1966:75-76), and at temples and shrines, paper prayers were burned in specially placed repositories (Kerr, 1958:219).

In Okinawa there were two types of shrine, go-sha (district shrines) and son-sha (village shrines). Eight

district shrines, including the hills and sacred groves, were owned and maintained by the Japanese government. Only the Kikoe-ogimi Shrine consecrated traditional Okinawan deities. The other seven go-sha enshrined deities of Japanese Shintoism. Deities commemorated at village shrines were predominately fire gods. Each village had one or two shrines, some as many as four or five (Haring, 1969:52-58).

A mikoshi was a portable shrine which transported the spirit of a deity to different places. This meant that evil could be absolved at any time or place. Religious festivals were often street processions which honored the deities of Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines (DeMente, 1989:78).

Customs

Possibly the most significant characteristic of Okinawan culture assimilated from Chinese culture was the kazoku seido (family system), which had special meaning with regard to daily life and attitudes about death. An obligation among living family members to preserve genealogy, coexisted with an obligation to commemorate all ancestors. The father devolved family responsibility to the eldest son, who succeeded to head of the house at the time of his father's death or retirement.

There was also a connection between the family system and the use of the natural environment. The system of inheritance was the primary influence on land use and land tenure. Land use included agricultural and uncultivated land (Glacken, 1955:

88-130). Since Okinawan villages retained a culture "based on the utilization of plants" (Glacken, 1955:3) the association of land and people has remained an essential theme in the study of Okinawan culture.

In Okinawa, grass roofs, wooden siding and house flooring, reeds for geta (sandals) and tatami mats, the rice stalks and other grasses for baskets, were specific examples of this natural alliance. Only in modern times, have imported cottons replaced reeds and banana leaves for clothing. Use of stone has always been fundamental to most construction in Okinawa. Throughout history, gates, bridges, castles, public and government buildings, domestic dwellings, and tombs were built of limestone indigenous to the Ryukyu Islands (Glacken, 1955:3-4).

Unique to Okinawa were burial tombs which differed significantly from those on the Japanese mainland. Primarily influenced by southern China, the design and construction denoted the importance of tombs in various traditional festivals and rituals. During the Seimei festival in April, family members gathered in the courtyards of family tombs to pay their respects to departed ancestors. Elaborate meals were prepared and consumed, and the importance of family was reaffirmed.

When construction of a tomb was completed, huge celebrations followed. Families and guests performed traditional Okinawan dances to the steady rhythm of the

shamisen and taiko. These celebrations conveyed veneration of the tomb as a permanent home after death.

The family tomb remains important in all aspects of Okinawan daily life. Historically, tombs were built for use by all members of a clan; but now, almost every family has its own tomb. It is not uncommon to see tombs immediately adjacent to housing areas and businesses ("This Week on Okinawa", "Burial Tombs, A Continuing Symbol of Okinawa", 1989:2-5).

There are two primary types of tombs in Okinawa. The hafu was originally a tomb for nobility, but gradually acquired popularity among the poorer classes. Dug into a hillside, the hafu has a stone roof and door (Zabilka, 1966:123-125). George Kerr refers to these tombs as "ie-gata." (Kerr, 1958:218).

Kamekokata or turtleback (Glacken, 1955:246-247) tombs are also built into hillsides, or on land not suitable for agriculture (Glacken, 1955:246-247); but the appearance of this tomb resembles a tortoise shell (Zabilka, 1966:124). There is also conjecture that this curvilinear construction is symbolic of the womb from which all men inevitably come (Kerr, 1958:218).

Many Okinawans believe that the shape of the kamekokata tomb denotes the position of a woman giving birth. All men are temporary inhabitants of a mortal world. Following this momentary experience, each returns to a permanent home in the afterworld. At death, the peace and quiet of a "former state or a former place" are restored. In the Buddhist tradition,

the dead attain god status, and return to the "womb of nature" which represents the "original source" of all mankind (Glacken, 1955:246-247).

The Kamekokata (turtleback) tomb was probably the best example of Okinawan tomb architecture. It was first constructed in Okinawa in 1540 A.D. as the burial place of Lord Gosamaru ("This Week on Okinawa", "Burial Tombs, A Continuing Symbol of Okinawa", 1989:4-5). It has a basic similarity to the tombs of Fukien, China, and extensive research has supported the origin of the kamekokata tomb in China (Glacken, 1955:246-247).

Inside both the hafu and kamekokata was a small room with steps leading to an altar. On these steps were urns which contained the cleansed bones of the dead. These often beautifully decorated urns revealed the names and dates of the deceased (Zabilka, 1966:123-125). In recent times, this custom has been abandoned (Glacken, 1955:248).

Okinawans are extremely proud of their family tombs, and spend considrable money to construct them. It is not unusual for the average Okinawan to spend more money on the family tomb than on his home (Zabilka, 1966:124). "...a family will normally opt for the most expensive tomb that it is in their power to purchase as the burial tomb is looked on as a place of continuing life after death rather than an end to life." ("This Week on Okinawa", "Burial Tombs, A Continuing Symbol of Okinawa", 1989:5).

The custom of bone-washing occurred about three years after interment (Glacken, 1955:248. Lebra, 1985:200). Cleaned bones were reinterred in a funerary urn. Feet, legs, and pelvis were entered first. These were followed by the backbones, arms, and skull. The urn was placed so that the eyes of the skull faced the back of the tomb. This custom was thought to make the spirit of the deceased less inclined to leave the tomb. In recent times, bone-washing has caused some aversion among generations of younger Okinawans, and there is some hope that it will be changed (Lebra, 1985:200-201).

For centuries, kara-shishi (Chinese lion-dogs) (Kishaba, 1988:111), and koma-inu (Korean dog) (Zabilka, 1966:77) have guarded against the intrusion of evil spirts. Okinawan shi shi were unique in some respects. They were usually an unmatched pair, and both were male. One had an open mouth, inviting good into the home; the other had a closed mouth, shutting out all evil ("Welcome Okusan, 1982-1983:270. Cole, "The Shi-Shi Lion Dogs", 1990:28). Identified with the Shinto religion, they were placed at entrances to family homes, tombs and shrines, keeping those inside safe from prevailing evils. They were placed singly on rooftops (Zabilka, 1966:77-78).

Many years ago a Ryukyuan emissary returned from China with a stone kara-shishi which he presented to the king. According to legend, this charm was responsible for the demise of a dragon which had routinely devoured the livestock of Madanbashi village. When the kara-shishi was pointed in the

direction of this menacing dragon, lion roars were heard, a fierce wind blew the dragon into the East China Sea, and suddenly a huge rock fell from the sky. The dragon was unable to move, because its tail was firmly anchored by the immense weight of the rock. One day when the villagers looked, the dragon had changed into the island named Gaanamui. The Kara-shishi became the protector of Okinawan villages (Kishaba, 1988:111-113).

Originally developed in Japan, Togyu (bullfighting) came to the Ryukyus in the seventeenth century (Kishaba, 1988:118). It is dissimilar to the more traditional bullfights of Spain and Latin America. There are no daring matadors parading bravery in front of "flower throwing senoritas." (Zabilka, 1966:125). Okinawan fighting bulls are occasionally injured, but rarely killed.

Bulls are matched according to strength, weight, and fighting techniques and experience. Inside the fighting ring, skilled handlers guide and maneuver the bulls until one bull retreats. Matches usually last from 10 to 30 minutes, after which there is a celebration in customary Okinawan tradition. There is much eating, drinking, and dancing. Winning bulls receive generous accolades. Togyu season begins in early spring and lasts until early fall (Zabilka, 1966:125-127).

Summary and Final Comments

Okinawans are a simple, humble people whose "amiable

disposition" (Zabilka, 1966:28) was observed by foreigners throughout history. "These islanders are represented as being remarkable for their honesty and adherence to truth,...." (M'Leod, 1963 reprint of 1817 John Murray ed.:97). They possess an instilled obedience to superiors, a respect for elders, and a veneration of ancestors.

In 1879, Okinawa was annexed by Japan which integrated the Okinawan people "almost completely into the Japanese governmental, economic, and cultural structure." (Appleman, Burns, Gugeler, Stevens, 1965:9). While Okinawans generally resemble Japanese in appearance, they differ appreciably in culture.

Traditional Okinawan society was agrarian. Farmers conservatively managed their land, always seeking to preserve the delicate balance between man and nature. Significant changes came, however, with the postwar urbanization of the Naha, Koza areas. New industrial facilities, massive U.S. military base complexes, and new road networks reduced arable land, which changed the customary Ryukyuan way of life. In isolated parts of Okinawa, and in some offshore islands, a simple agricultural and fishing economy still exists (McCune, 1975:66-68).

Villages nearer the Pacific Ocean and East China Sea were primarily fishing villages. Inland villages were entirely agricultural. Both men and women were responsible for farming the land. Skills were developed through experience, and

because of inadequate soils, Ryukyuan agronomy was frequently disciplined and expedient (McCune, 1975:73).

The importance of cultural contact is discernible in the history of the Okinawan people. As a consequence of prolific trade with other Asian countries, particularly China and Japan, and as a direct result of invasion by Japan and in 1945 by the United States, Ryukyuan culture developed and changed into the culture as it appears today. Underlying this modern perspective are older intrinsic beliefs which seem "part of a wider prehistoric culture complex of which animism and shamanism were important elements: the religious rites conducted by women, the gods of the well, groves, and trees, and the ancestor worship which existed long before Confucius, in the sixth century B.C., built an enduring ethical system upon it." (Glacken, 1955:298).

Okinawan culture was profusely impacted by Chinese civilization, especially from the fourteenth century to the early seventeenth century, and influences continued into the late nineteenth century. These influences are apparent in Okinawan arts and crafts, the family system, religious practices, and in festivals which are celebrated annually. From Japan came a new national language, social reorganization, and knowledge of Western culture.

"History of Okinawa reveal distinguished record of conquerors.

We have honor to be subjugated in 14th century by Chinese pirates.

In sixteenth century by English missionaries.

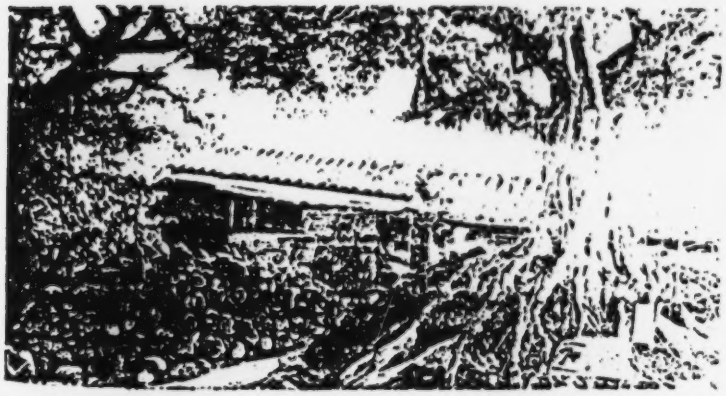
In eighteenth century by Japanese warlords.

And in twentieth century by American Marines.

Okinawa very fortunate.

Culture brought to us...not have to leave home for it."

(Patrick, 1957:6).



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#3

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Owned by Mr. Seisho Ishikawa, Ginowan City.

Owned by Mr. Seisho Kuniyoshi, Yomitan.

jiishigami - large jar for storing bones. After an individual's bones have been cleaned they are gathered together and put in one of these jars and the jar placed on a platform at the rear of the family or munchu tomb. It is the custom to place the bones of both man and wife in the same jar. The name of the person or persons whose bones are inside will be written someplace on the jiishigami. The joyaki jiishigami is made in the form of a temple with applied decorations of a Budhist nature. On both arayachi and joyaki jiishigami a gate is depicted.

#4

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Owned by the Okinawa Prefectural Museum.

miso gami - this large arayachi jar was also found in nearly all households. It was used to store miso, beans, rice and other grains.

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dachibin - this crescent shaped glazed pot was used to hold awamori when going on a day trip such as to a festival, a market, or when overseeing some work away from home. It is designed to be worn on the hip, suspended from the shoulder. Wealthy farmers would have these made to their special order and surviving examples from pre-war days often display very elegant decoration and color of glaze. Because this is a form peculiar to Okinawa, at present they are made to be sold as souvenirs to tourists and also as flower vases.

#6

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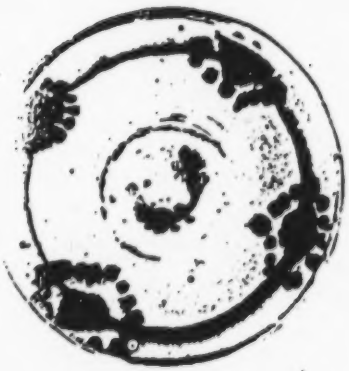

sara - These three plates are of the type used to serve various foods at the daily meal. The plate at the upper left is decorated with a stylized drawing of a rice stalk. The pattern on the plate at the lower left is called hana uchi and was very common in Okinawa. The design on the plate at the right is called karaksa and is traditionally believed to be based on Persian and Chinese prototypes. These are three typical motifs often seen on Tsuboya pottery. Smaller plates of the same shape, called ke-uchi, are also used when eating. Large plates are called hira bachi.

#7

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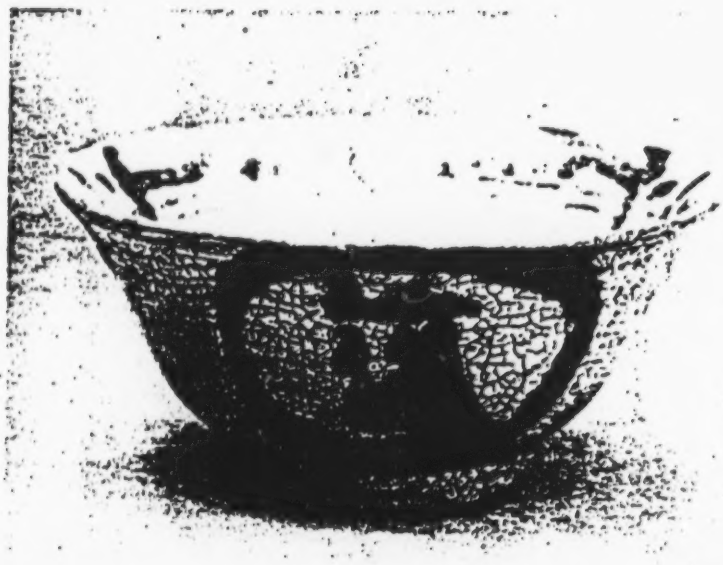

Owned by the Okinawa Prefectural Museum.

makai - this shape is one of the most common in Okinawan pottery. It is said to have been introduced by the Korean potters who came to Okinawa in the early 17th century. This type bowl is used to serve rice, soup, and other dishes at daily meals. Smaller ones of the same shape, called chawan, are used to drink tea, and still smaller ones, called sakechibu, are used to drink awamori.

#8

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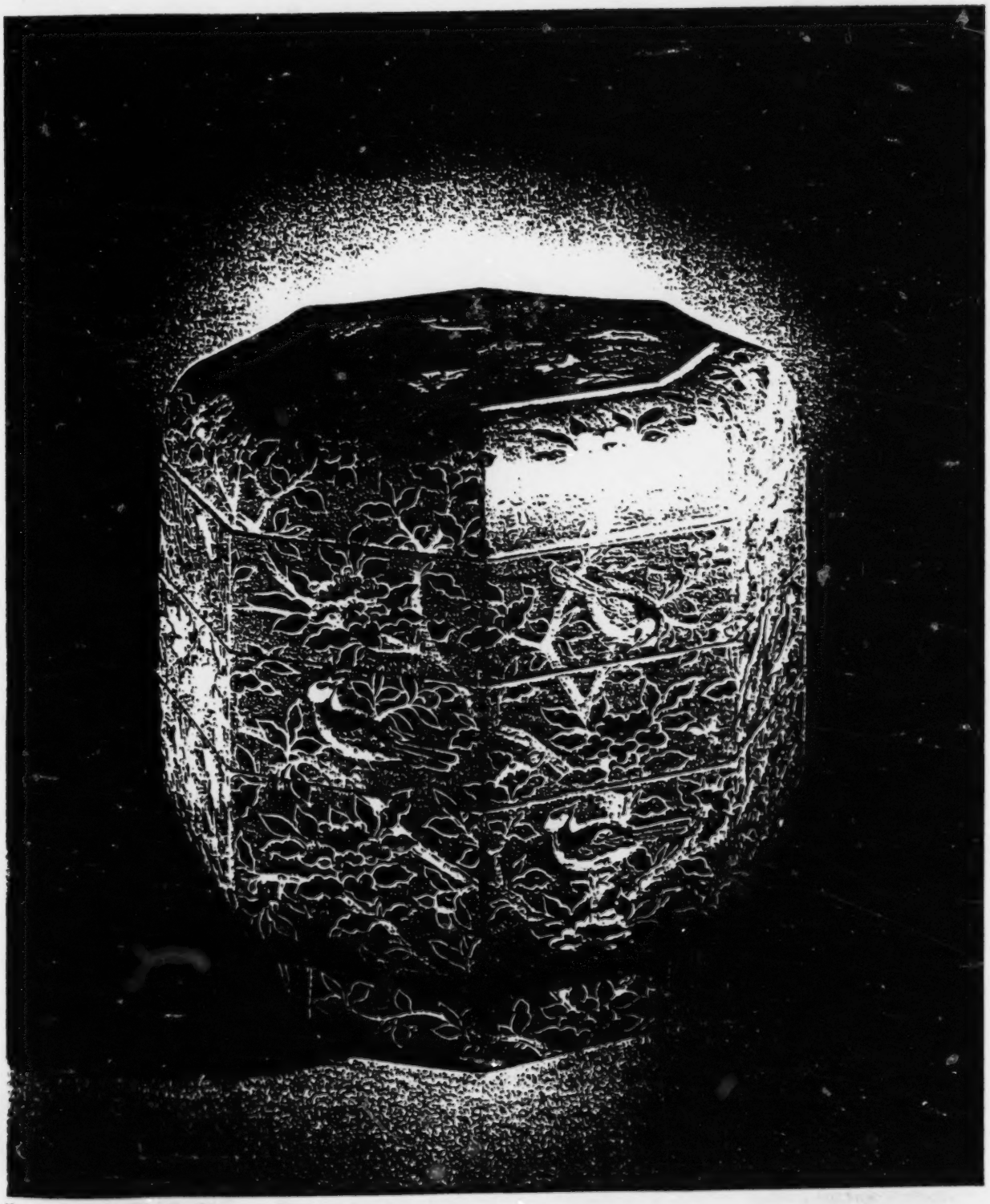

#9

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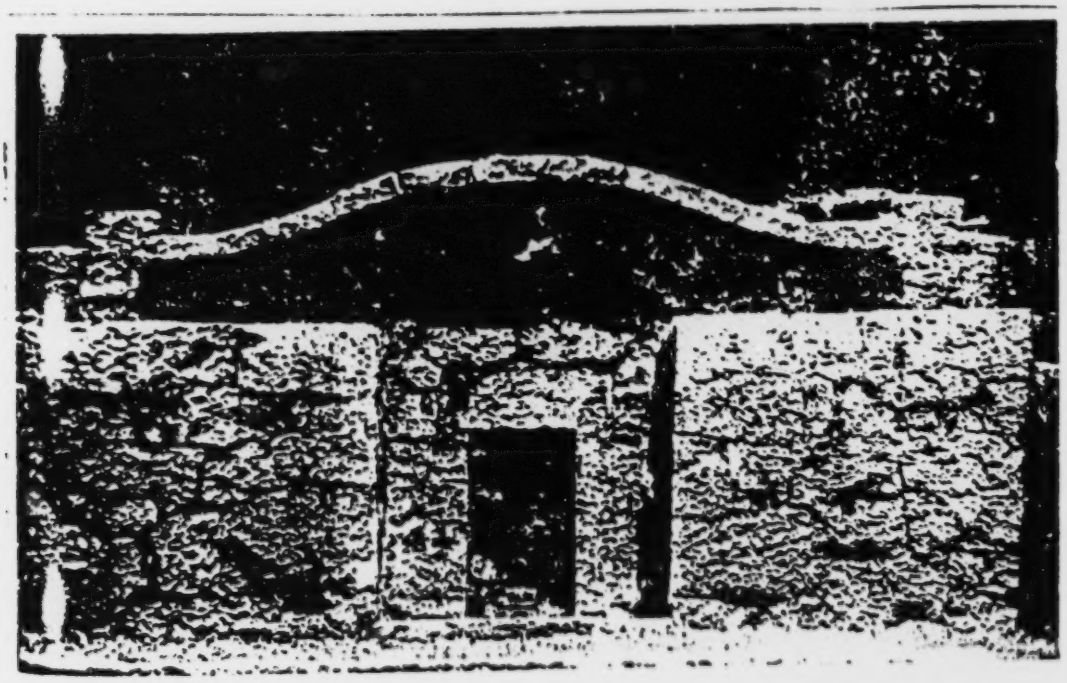
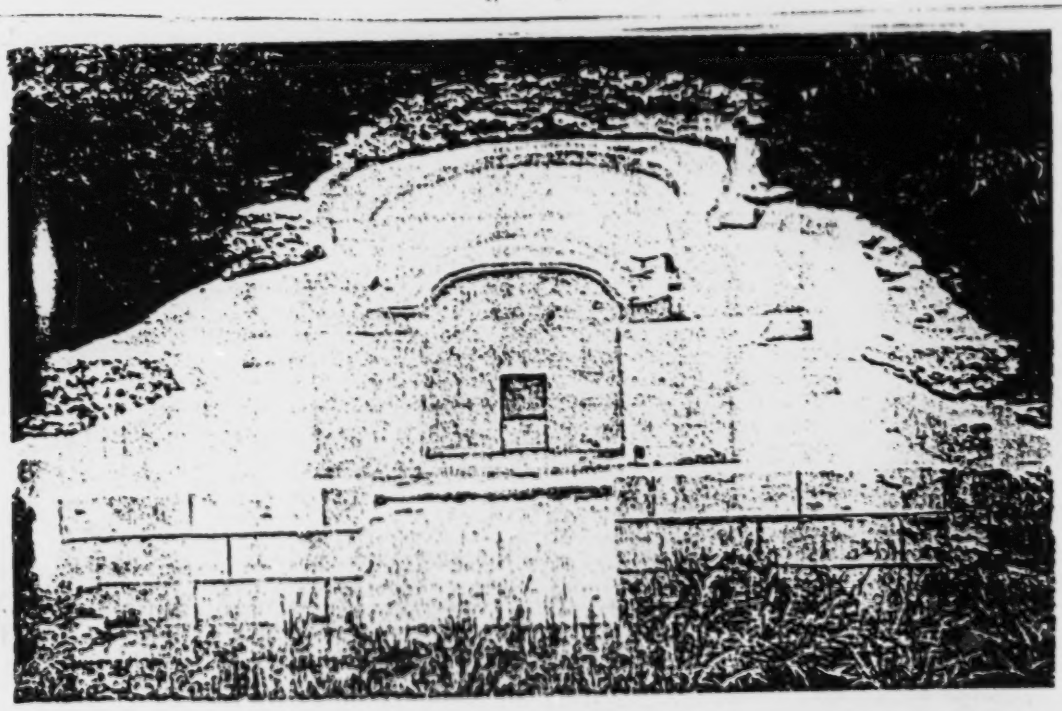


(Hafu)



#13 (Kamekokata)

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